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SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY
PRESS CONFERENCE
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DE LASKI: Thank you for coming. I'm Kathleen de Laski from the U.S. Department of Defense and I'm here to present to you Dr. William Perry, the U.S. Secretary of Defense, and Robert Hunter, our U.S. Ambassador to NATO. Dr. Perry will make a brief opening statement and then we will call on you for questions. Dr. Perry.

SECRETARY PERRY: Just a half an hour ago, I got off the phone talking with Secretary-General Manfred Woerner, and he was as pleased as I was pleased with the results of this historic meeting. For me it was a moving experience to sit at the same NATO conference table where I've sat many times before with other defense ministers planning how to defend against Warsaw Pact nations, and today to be sitting with the defense ministers from those same nations, jointly planning and cooperating in peacekeeping.

We had four different kinds of meetings in the last two days. We had the Nuclear Planning Group and the Defense Planning Committee, the regular NATO, doing normal NATO business; we had a number of bilateral meetings, that is, meetings between the United States on one hand and Russia on the other hand, or the United States and Poland. We ordinarily take advantage of having the defense ministers here to try to do some ordinary defense business with the individual countries. We had, of course, the briefing last night by Minister Grachev, describing the Russian defense policy. And then today this historic meeting of the defense ministers forming the new Partnership--the NATO Partnership for Peace.

This evening thirty of the ministers of defense are going to be going to the new Partnership Center at Mons for a final reception--sort of a bonding after the meetings are over.

I would say there are two highlights of these events of the last two days. Certainly, the first meeting of the Partnership for Peace was a major highlight. We have gone in six months from concept to reality. It was just six months ago that this concept of the Partnership for Peace was advanced. And here we had the first meeting with the eighteen members. And this is a major step in removing the dividing lines which have separated Eastern Europe from Western Europe for decades now.

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The second highlight, of course, was the presence of Minister Grachev at the meeting. He said, as you know, that Russia would unconditionally join the Partnership for Peace. He described the ideas for defense cooperation with NATO, beyond the Partnership for Peace. We had several discussions on that. He gave, as I mentioned, this presentation on military doctrine. And besides his presence at the meeting, the United States and Russia had bilateral meetings, where we discussed issues of concern to our two countries. We discussed our joint peacekeeping exercise that is planned for this Summer in Russia. We discussed issues in Bosnia. We discussed some non-proliferation issues. In sum, this meeting, I think, very clearly demonstrated NATO's strength and its flexibility in dealing with these very dramatic changes that are going on in the world. And it demonstrated that our relations with our allies are even stronger than ever.

On those opening remarks, I'd be happy to take questions. Kathleen will field them.

Q: Mr. Secretary, how do you feel about Minister Grachev's proposal to use Partnership for Peace for broader east-west talks? Is that a viable proposal from your point of view?

SECRETARY PERRY: I didn't see it that way. I saw the Partnership for Peace as one distinct entity. And, as I understand it, Russia is prepared to join the Partnership for Peace without conditions. That's what Minister Grachev told me and the press this morning. A separate issue are the whole set of cooperation areas that are beyond the Partnership for Peace. These include non-proliferation, issues concerning cooperation in Bosnia, nuclear doctrine. These are issues which, bilaterally, the United States has been discussing with Russia for several years now. They have nothing to do with Partnership for Peace. And as I understood Minister Grachev's proposal, he was proposing that those kind of discussions be broadened beyond the bilateral Russia-U.S. one to a Russia-NATO discussion. And that's going to be considered by the Allies in the time ahead of us and something will come out of that proposal. I have not read the document he presented along that line, the so-called parameters, so I can't comment on that. But, as I understood from his discussion, it was simply doing on a broader basis with NATO the things he has been doing the last several years with the United States anyway.

Q: Dr. Perry, a brief follow-up. To put it more directly, do you feel that NATO should agree to Russia's call for virtually automatic political consultation with the Alliance on virtually any subjects it wants, in Europe, or world-wide? And did you get any sense from your talks with the Polish Defense Minister and the Ukrainians and Kazakhs that they are concerned that Russia might be trying to insinuate its political will on NATO?

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SECRETARY PERRY: I had no discussion with Minister Grachev, nor did I participate or hear a discussion where he made such a call or such a demand. I have described as accurately as I could what it was we were talking about, which was, as I said, simply an extension of the sort of bilateral consultations we've been doing with Russia right along. But I did not--he did not--propose to me any demand for, let's say, a veto power over any actions which NATO might take, and I did not hear that discussion anywhere in the meetings today. I have heard, before this meeting, several of the Central and Eastern European countries express concern about what Russia's intentions might be within the Partnership for Peace. But those issues did not come up directly at the meeting because Minister Grachev did not make such proposals at the meeting, or at the bilaterals that he had with us.

Q: Just a brief follow-up. Aside from what you understand what Mr. Grachev asked for, do you think NATO should agree to automatic consultation with Moscow on virtually anything Moscow wants to consult on, be it in Europe or world-wide, in the political area?

SECRETARY PERRY: I heard the Deputy Secretary-General's answer to essentially that same question, and I concur with what he said.

Q: Nonetheless, the speech by Mr. Grachev refers to a new plan he'd like to see, called NATO-Russia, which seems to cut out the Eastern European countries in developing a new world view. And he suggests that NATO is too concerned with preserving itself and not enough concerned with moving the world forward. How do you respond to that kind of a proposal and suggestion?

SECRETARY PERRY: I cannot really respond to it with any precision, because, as I said, he did not really make any specific proposal along those lines. I heard the same phrase that you heard, but he did not make that proposal. We didn't discuss it. And I've never had such discussions with him bilaterally. So I just can't really make an informed comment on that.

Q: Sir, just to clarify, do you have any objection to seeing these discussions that have taken place for years, as you say, on a bilateral basis, being broadened now to NATO? Issues such as nuclear non-proliferation. Is there any problem in your or the Administration's viewpoint?

SECRETARY PERRY: We, as I said, have been having these discussions bilaterally. To the extent Russia wants to extend those bilateral discussion with other nations in NATO, that's really for them to decide and not for me to advise them on. I guess that's about all I can say. They would not be appropriate issues in general for the Partnership for Peace. It's set up along different parameters altogether than that.

So I don't see those as reasonable issues for the Partnership for Peace. I do see them as reasonable issues for discussion with other NATO members, but that's for them to decide, not for me to decide.

Q: I'm sorry, sir, just to clarify again. The Russians are saying they want to discuss this with NATO beyond the realm of Partnership for Peace. What I'm trying to establish is whether the Administration has any objection to seeing these issues discussed by Russia with NATO that have previously been the domain of the bilateral relationship between Moscow and Washington.

SECRETARY PERRY: I couldn't make a general answer to that question. It's too broad. I will say that at the meeting we had last night, this was an example of that sort of a discussion between NATO and Russia. And we supported that and thought it was a very useful and a worthwhile endeavor. I think previous proposals of that sort had to be considered on a case by case basis. But I thought that the meeting last night was certainly an example of what you're talking about, a very useful example, and it was a NATO-Russia type discussion of those issues.

Q: Could the U.S. agree to accompanying Russia's signature of PFP, of the framework documents, with a non-binding declaration, and what might such a declaration cover?

SECRETARY PERRY: I didn't understand the question. Try it again?

Q: Could you foresee Russia's signature of Partnership for Peace, of the framework documents, being accompanied by a declaration, a non-binding agreement, and what might be in such a declaration?

SECRETARY PERRY: I can't speculate on what might be in such a declaration. The framework document--NATO's position on the framework document--is that all nations have the same framework document. Each partner can present its own presentation document, which basically is the plan on which they're going to participate in Partnership for Peace. Each of these nations will have a very different program, depending on that presentation document. And in Russia's case, because of their size and military capability, I would expect that to be a much larger and more fulsome program of cooperation than other nations. It's just simply based on their size and capability.

Q: Mr. Perry did you give Mr. Grachev any suggestions for the timing of the signing for the Partnership for Peace document or did he give you any indication of the timing?

SECRETARY PERRY: No.

Q: Sir, you mentioned in your introductory statement that you talked with General Grachev about possible cooperation in bilateral relations with Russia in Bosnia. Could you tell us please which form that cooperation could have?

SECRETARY PERRY: Yes, one of the principal areas in which the United States is involved in Bosnia now is in the effort to facilitate an agreement on cessation of hostilities and a peace agreement. Originally we were preceeding on that essentially by ourselves, working with the Muslims and the Croats. And that led to the framework agreement which was signed by the Muslims and the Croats more than a month ago. A few weeks ago those discussions were broadened to include the British, French, Russians, and the European Union. They have had two separate meetings, as you know, and the Russians have played an important and a prominent role in those meetings. So one area of very important cooperation in Bosnia has to do with trying to reach an agreement on the cessation of hostilities and the peace agreement. In particular, we believe that the Russians are likely to have more influence with the Serbs than either of the other countries in this contact group, although they say very directly that their influence is limited in that regard as well. In addition to that, we have, at various times in the past, asked them to use what influence they may have with the Bosnian Serb military to urge them to comply with various NATO ultimatums and in particular relative to the original Saravejo ultimatum. I had several discussions with Minister Grachev, urging him to get in touch with his military counterparts among the Bosnian-Serbs, urging compliance, more recently surrounding the Gorazde ultimatum.

Q: You mentioned in your bilateral meeting with Mr. Grachev about non-proliferation. Did you speak about the situation in Iran, and some effort to build military nuclear weapon? And second, the United States is following the situation in Yemen, where there is a war. Do you have any comment?

SECRETARY PERRY: I did not discuss with Minister Grachev the situation in Iran. On Yemen, we are hoping that the two sides will be able to reach a ceasefire and have some sort of diplomatic resolution of their problems. This is an area that has historically been an area of strife, but several years ago, North and South Yemen joined together in a government. And we had some reason to hope that that strife was behind us. That has, of course, fallen apart and resulted in the recent fighting in Yemen. We would hope that the two sides could have a ceasefire and negotiate on ways of getting a resolution of their difficulties there.

Q: In the Russian paper that was handed to NATO today there seems to be a stress on a peacekeeping role of Russia in the former Soviet republics and probably even in Eastern Europe. Do you agree on that importance, do you think it is possible that Russia should play a leading role in peacekeeping in

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Eastern Europe?

SECRETARY PERRY: I believe that the primary peacekeeping role around the world, including Eastern Europe, ought to be through the United Nations, and the peacekeeping operations should be done through a United Nations mandate, and that the role of Russia ought to be consistent with and compatible with those U.N. mandates and the request of forces -- the peacekeeping forces--that might be used there.